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DESIGNER SHOWCASE

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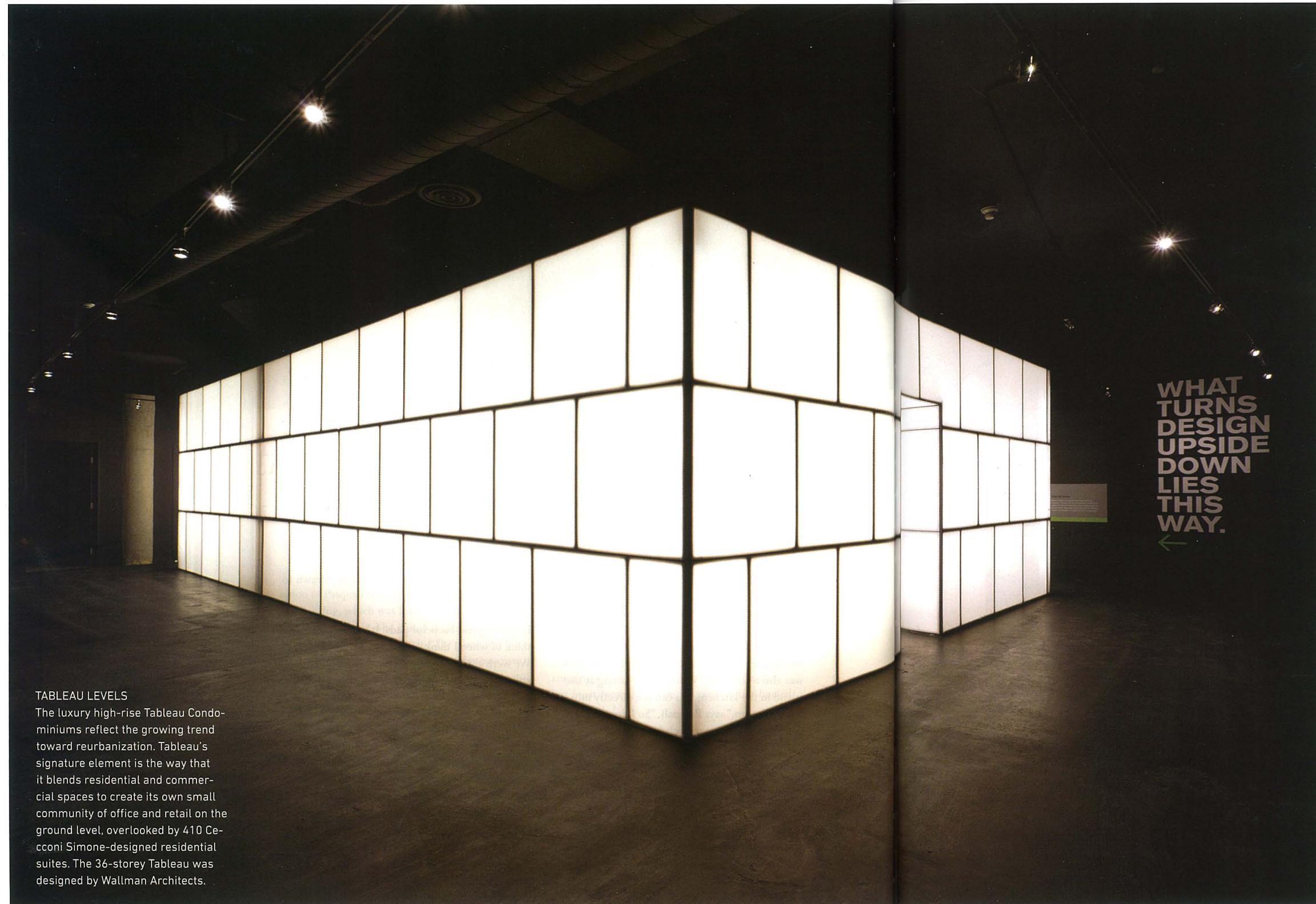


TABLEAU LEVELS

The luxury high-rise Tableau Condominiums reflect the growing trend toward reurbanization. Tableau's signature element is the way that it blends residential and commercial spaces to create its own small community of office and retail on the ground level, overlooked by 410 Cecconi Simone-designed residential suites. The 36-storey Tableau was designed by Wallman Architects.

Cecconi Simone Inc.

Many interior design firms concentrate on a few industries, or have a distinct perspective on design approaches. Cecconi Simone Inc., a multi-disciplinary interior design consulting firm located in Toronto, takes a broader view. At its founding in 1982, the firm focused on retail design, primarily for Alfred Sung and the Monaco Group (Club Monaco). Since then, Cecconi Simone has embraced projects for the restaurant and hospitality industry, financial institutions, government agencies, major advertising agencies, insurance companies, large-scale condominium/loft developments, hotels and others.

TEXT BY **FREDERICK JERANT**



UNIQUE FURNISHINGS
The furniture is a collection of reconditioned antiques, including a reupholstered Platner sofa. The bedroom has a custom headboard and the den is reinterpreted as a modern dressing area.

“People are becoming less enamoured of suburban living, particularly with the time wasted in transit from home to work, to entertainment, to shopping. A trend is to see cities as places to live, work and, socialise. This reurbanization is making urban centres relevant again.”

ELAINE CECCONI, FOUNDING PRINCIPAL

Cecconi Simone’s market niche is worldwide, with multi-unit residential projects in Canada, the U.S., Italy, Dubai, mainland China and other countries.

“One of our great strengths is our global perspective,” says Elaine Cecconi, founding principal. “Because we’ve worked around the world, we have unique insights that most other design firms just can’t match.”

One of its latest projects is Tableau Condominiums, a luxurious high-rise project in Toronto. “We were responsible for every aspect of the interior’s design—the front door, lobby, elevators, corridors, the amenity spaces, suite interiors and more,” says Cecconi. “Quite simply, we handled everything inward from the exterior walls.”

In Toronto, urban towers are becoming smaller and more tightly knit. There’s a social benefit, because it helps neighbouring residents become actual neighbours. There’s also an environmental benefit: by consuming less of everything, owners take pressure off the local infrastructure.

Tableau

The Cecconi Simone-designed Tableau model suite has sculpture-inspired full-height sliding doors, encouraging prospects to modify the space to their liking. The kitchen’s patterned doors allow it to be closed off from the rest of the space. The suite’s 1960s aesthetic is emphasized by a monochromatic white palette with contrast in the kitchen, dining table and light fixtures.

The strength of Tableau’s presence and the integration of art, design and function are apparent in the lobby. Designed by Cecconi Simone and displaying all of the sensibilities distinct to Tableau, the lobby will have 18-foot ceilings, terrazzo floors, a back-lit marble clad feature wall on one side and floor-to-ceiling windows overlooking the public plaza on the other. Sculptural staircase in lobby links the fourth floor interior amenities to the fifth floor outdoor terrace. A custom designed sculptural light fixture is suspended from the ceiling.





M3M Golf Estate

India has a deep and complex history, but many newly successful Indians embrace change. "Instead, they prefer designs with a strong Western influence," Simone says.

The M3M Golf Estate, an 1,800-home development just outside Delhi, is indicative of that trend. For example, the kitchen in Indian homes is usually isolated, but in M3M, it's become the entertainment hub, with the living room and dining room flowing from it.

Similarly, traditional Indian design features ornate cornices, baseboards, frames, and doors. But at M3M, "The interiors are very clean and modern," Simone says. "Some rooms feature floor-to-ceiling stone, and recessed lighting is the norm throughout."

"Instead of containing just a party room, a lounge, and a swimming pool, these sprawling, complex spaces house fitness centres, basketball courts, restaurants, movie theatres, and banquet halls," Simone says. "It's like a mini-community where everyone congregates." Simone says, "This is not a project you'd expect to find in India. It feels as if you've transported a Western luxury complex halfway around the globe."

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"People are becoming less enamoured of suburban living," says Cecconi, "particularly with the time wasted in transit from home to work, to entertainment, to shopping. A trend is to see cities as places to live, work, and socialise. This reurbanization is making urban centres relevant again."

"A key question is 'How much space do you really need to live well?' and Tableau is an excellent example of maximizing utility while minimizing space," Cecconi says. Some of Tableau's units are as small as 405 square feet.

She adds that the firm wanted to explore and expand the concept of flexible space, and took the idea to a new level. "Practically every wall is a moving element," Cecconi says. "You can have a series of compartmentalized spaces, or open them and enjoy the expansive space. Actually, the only two formally defined spaces are the bathroom and kitchen. The rest of the unit can be whatever you want it to be."



Five Condos

The Cecconi Simone-designed sales centre for the Five Condos project in Toronto offers prospects an unusual perspective—it's an exact replica of a model suite in the building, and is situated in the future lobby area. "Most on-site sales centres are tucked away, almost as an afterthought," says founder/designer Anna Simone. "But here you'll have the experience of walking into the actual entrance of your home."

Cecconi Simone is also responsible for designing the amenity spaces at the luxury high-rise located at St. Joseph and St. Nicholas Streets. "We studied the existing historic buildings in the area," says Simone, "and reinterpreted the materials to 21st-century applications while keeping their historic essence."

Simone adds, "These materials really help set a sense of mood and style as you move through the amenity spaces," which include fitness/weight rooms, a cocktail lounge, a kitchen/dining room, piano bar and two exquisite roof gardens. Heavy timbers surround the elevator cabs, ceilings are clad in distressed corrugated metal, and concrete floors and industrial-influenced lighting echo their use in nearby warehouses and retail spaces. Cecconi Simone's efforts have already paid off. The project has earned four awards from the Building, Industry and Land Development Association.



A cutout pattern in the kitchen's sliding panels provides an interesting visual feature. "We adapted it from elements that appear in *Nova*, a public art piece by Shayne Dark that is part of the building's colonnade entrance," she says. *Nova* strongly resembles pick-up sticks, and similar linear elements were incorporated into the kitchen walls.

In addition, Cecconi says, "Everything is finished in tones of white, with occasional black accents, such as the kitchen and the dining table. We wanted prospects to fully appreciate the sense of space and flexibility," without the distractions of splashes of colour. However, buyers can choose from six coordinated palettes of finishes and colours to offset the basic starkness of the concept. "They're self-contained," Cecconi says. Owners can pick everything at once.

"Many people have never had to be concerned about such details before, and are happy to let us narrow down their choices," she adds. "All colours and tonal ranges coordinate well within each group," she says, "so owners are spared the angst of picking and choosing from a wide array of colours and then hoping it all works out."

Cecconi notes that the design packages are not just variations on a theme. "Some of them are rather mainstream, while others have a sense of the avant

garde," she says. "Others are playful, but all are tasteful and sophisticated."

The Tableau building itself is comprised of classic materials, including stainless steel, mirrors and stone. For example, the lobby's back wall features a beautiful marble treatment that can be viewed from the street. Those same materials were given a more contemporary spin and applied throughout the building as interesting design elements.

In keeping with the concept of tightly knit communities, Tableau also features extensive amenities aimed at drawing residents together. There are several party rooms that are equipped with large food prep areas, grills, plenty of counter space and a dining area for six or more, making them ideal for casual outdoor entertaining. Lounge areas feature tasteful accoutrements and cocktail tables for more intimate gatherings. Guest suites, private cabanas, a fully equipped gym with a co-ed steam room, a screening room and a business centre are among the other well-considered features that make Tableau more than just a place to live.

"It all goes back to the concept of revitalizing urban centres," Cecconi concludes. "Even though it's a residential tower, it functions as a real neighbourhood, with practically everything you need close at hand." ■